

21ST CENTURY KING JAMES BIBLE CONFUSION

June 2, 1998 (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, www.wayoflife.org) - In 1994 Deuel Enterprises of Gary, South Dakota published *The 21st Century King James Version*. It claims to be an attempt to retain the text of the King James Bible while modernizing antiquated words and updating punctuation, and in some ways it is better than other attempts to update the KJV, such as the New King James Version and Jay Green's *King James Version II*. Since many have asked us about the *KJV21*, we are issuing the following review:

SOME POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT THE KJV21

I will start with a few positive things that I have noted about the *KJV21*.

First, no textual changes were made. Whereas the New King James Version, though professing to follow the exact text of the KJV actually makes a number of departures from the text used by the AV translators (and in the margin, the NKJV actually promotes the critical text), and whereas Jay Green (editor of the *King James Bible II*) believes the KJV-Received Text should be corrected with the so-called "Majority Text," I did not find any textual changes in the *21st Century KJV (KJV21)*. There might be some, of course. I did not examine the entire *KJV21* text, but every key passage that I checked retained the proper reading.

Second, thee, thy, thou, hath, art, cometh, etc. are retained. The publisher gives this reason: "because they are readily understood and have remained an eloquent and beautiful part of our traditional language of worship and prayer. In addition, by retaining these words, we have preserved distinctions in meaning found in the King James Version, but abandoned in contemporary versions." This, of course, is a very important matter. When modern English versions remove "Thee, Thy, Thine," replacing them with "you" and "your," they are removing an important translation distinction between the second person plural and singular pronouns. In King James Bible English terminology "thee, thy, and thine" are singular pronouns; whereas "you" and "your" are plural. Greek and Hebrew also uses different pronouns to distinguish between singular and plural. Thus the old Bible English can accurately and precisely translate the Greek and Hebrew pronouns, whereas modern English cannot easily do so. Consider Exodus 4:15: "THOU shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with THY mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach YOU what YE shall do." The first part of the verse, using the singular "thou" and "thy," refers to Moses himself. In the second part of the verse, though, God is referring to the nation Israel. This is evident from the use of the plural "you" and "ye." (Other example are Matt. 26:64; Lk. 22:31,32; John 3:7; Titus 3:15.) The reader of the King James Bible can see these distinctions with ease, and the editors of the *KJV21* have rightly left this distinction intact.

Third, the great doctrinal terms were not changed. In contrast to many modern translations, the *KJV21* does not appear to tamper with the key doctrinal terms of Scripture: judgment remains judgment; doctrine remains doctrine; justification remains justification; sanctification remains sanctification; propitiation remains propitiation; righteousness remains righteousness; atonement remains atonement.

Fourth, on the whole it appears to me that fewer changes were made than in other attempts to modernize the King James Bible.

SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE KJV21

This is not to say that we recommend the *21st Century King James Version*. We do not. There are a number of problems with the *KJV21* which we will now list:

FIRST, IT IS COPYRIGHTED IN SUCH A WAY THAT FORBIDS REPRINTING IT ROYALTY FREE AS CAN BE DONE OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM WITH THE KING JAMES BIBLE. The [copyright notice in the KJV21](#) grants permission to quote or reprint selections of not more than 200 verses, only insofar as the verses quoted do not comprise more than 40% of the work in which quoted, and only insofar as the verses quoted do not comprise an entire book of the Bible when quoted.

SECOND, TYPOGRAPHICALLY IT IS SET IN A MANNER THAT IS CONFUSING AND UNPLEASANT TO THE EYE. There is a basic style, plus three variations which indicate familiar passages, less familiar passages, and the sayings of Christ. The idea is interesting, but I found the result to be confusing and unpleasant. Further, important Old Testament verses, such as Leviticus 17:11, are strangely set in smaller type.

THIRD, MANY UNNECESSARY CHANGES ARE MADE. It is one thing to update a few words in the KJV which have totally changed or lost meaning today, such as "we do you to wit" or "bewray." (This can easily be done in the margin without changing the text and therefore creating a multiplicity of biblical standards. The Bible for Today ministry, 900 Park Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108, is in the process of publishing just such a Bible. It is called the [Defined King James Bible](#), and it simply and effectively defines the KJV words in the margins. The [Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity](#) defines an exhaustive list of words and phrases in the King James Bible which are difficult or have changed meaning. Way of Life Literature is also in the process of publishing a concise edition of its Bible Dictionary which will fit into a standard Bible case.) The *21st Century King James Bible* goes far beyond the expressed goal of changing a few antiquated words. Consider the *KJV21* reading of 2 Timothy 4:1-4 as an example. I will note the changes with uppercase type.

Verse 1--I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom:

Verse 2--preach the Word. Be instant in season AND out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Verse 3--For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but HAVING ITCHING EARS, THEY SHALL HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR OWN LUSTS.

Verse 4--And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall TURN TOWARD fables.

Some will argue, no doubt, that these changes are acceptable renderings of the Received Text underlying the KJV, but my point is that none of these changes are NECESSARY to the expressed goal of updating a few antiquated terms. To add the word "AND" in verse 2 is unnecessary and makes the reading clumsier. To change the construction of the last half of verse

3 and to change "after their own lusts" to "with their own lusts" is, again, unnecessary, creates a different meaning, and destroys the incomparable beauty of the Authorized Version. Again, to change "unto fables" to "toward fables" adds nothing and is absolutely unnecessary. This simple example demonstrates that the *KJV21* is not a mere updating of a few antiquated terms. We suspect that a wide variety of change was introduced merely to make it possible for the *KJV21* to be different enough from the KJV to allow a copyright to be placed on it.

This type of unnecessary change is found throughout the *21st Century King James Version*. One reviewer of the *KJV21*, George Shafer, did a computer check of the verses in the four Gospels, comparing the *KJV21* with the original KJV (*Lifeline*, January 1998, Anchor Baptist Church, 1880 East 5600 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84121). He discovered that the *KJV21* modified 2,200 of the 3,779 verse -- nearly 60% of them!

In the introductory notes to the *KJV21*, the publishers quote a number of literary critics who have praised the King James Bible. Note a few of these interesting citations:

"It [the King James Bible] is unlike any other book in our language, and in charm and power is above them all."

"... the Authorized Version of the English Bible is the best example of English literature that the world has ever seen."

"It is the most beautiful of all translations of the Bible; indeed it is probably the most beautiful piece of writing in all the literature of the world."

"The glory of the King James Version has always been that it falls rightly on the ear. In it the meaning of the words seems set to music."

In conclusion, the *KJV21* publishers call the King James Bible "the summit of literary excellence." This is a lovely commendation, but if they truly believed this, they would not have made the changes that they did.

FOURTH, THE KJV21 IS INTENDED TO BE AN ECUMENICAL BIBLE. This is evident in the *KJV21* literature and web site ([www.kj21.com /](http://www.kj21.com/)). The *KJV21* web site contains four recommendations: two from Catholics, one from an Anglican, and one from a Lutheran (Theodore Letis).

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM BIBLE

FURTHER, AND EVEN MORE TELLING, THE TEXT OF THE *KJV21* IS BEING USED TO PRODUCE A BIBLE WITH THE GOAL OF UNITING ALL OF CHRISTIANITY. IT IS CALLED THE *THIRD MILLENNIUM BIBLE* and is advertised "as a Bible for all of Christendom" on the Internet at the following newly created web site: www.tmbible.com/.

The *Third Millennium Bible* is not yet published, but it is being offered at a pre-publication price via the Internet. The *Third Millennium Bible* project shares the same address and phone number with the 21st Century King James Bible Publishers. In an e-mail dated June 5, 1998, from William D. Prindle, President, KJ21 Bible Publishers, I was told that "both KJ21 Bible Publishers and Third Millennium Publications are subsidiaries of our parent corporation Deuel Enterprises, Inc., a South Dakota corporation in Gary, SD."

The *Third Millennium Bible* web site says, "The grievous shame of Christendom is its tragic fragmentation." This, of course, is not true. The truly grievous shame of Christianity is heresy and apostasy. The grievous shame is that most churches and denominations which name the name of Christ are not strictly committed to the Word of God but have turned from the Word of God to man-made doctrines and doctrines of devils. This apostasy, or turning away from the faith once delivered to the saints, is no surprise. It is plainly prophesied in the New Testament Scriptures (Matt. 7:15-23; 24:3,4,11,24; Acts 20:28-32; 2 Cor. 11:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 6-11; Jude 3-25; Rev. 13,17). The current effort to unite all who name the name of Christ regardless of doctrinal belief and practice is flagrant disobedience to the Bible. God has instructed His people to mark and avoid those who teach false doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Tim. 2:15-21; 3:5; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 8-11). It is absolutely impossible to be faithful to sound Bible doctrine and to seek to practice biblical separation from error and at the same time be ecumenical. An ecumenical biblicist is an oxymoron.

The publishers of the *Third Millennium Bible* (based on the *KJV21*) play up the value of the Catholic Douay-Rheims Version and tie the King James Bible and the Catholic Bible into the same bundle. Note the following amazing statement from the *Third Millennium Bible* web site:

"The Douay-Rheims Version and the King James Version have provided English-language Bible readers world-wide with intrinsically similar, though not identical, wording for well over four centuries. These two historic versions in turn are the only universally accepted English Bible translations developed over the past four hundred years. One of these need only be minimally updated to furnish all believers with a truly universal text. This has now been accomplished. The *Third Millennium Bible* presents the updated modern recension of the A.D. 1611 King James Version. It stands markedly closer to the Douay-Rheims Version than does either the King James Version or the Douay-Rheims Version to any contemporary Bible. The balance of this preface will focus on how a suitably modern biblical text in the English language for all of Christendom has come to be developed and published" (Publishers of the *Third Millennium Bible*).

The goal of the *Third Millennium Bible* publishers is to produce a Bible which will be acceptable to ecumenical Catholics and ecumenical Protestants. In their ecumenical enthusiasm, the publishers of the *Third Millennium Bible* claim that the Catholic Douay and the King James Bible are based on the same Greek text, but this is a myth. The old Catholic New Testament contained many serious textual departures. We have documented this in our book [*Rome and the Bible*](#) (\$19.95 + \$4 S/H from Way of Life Literature, 1701 Harns Rd., Oak Harbor, WA 98277. 360-675-8311).

The *Third Millennium Bible* will contain 14 of the Apocryphal Books. These were written during the two hundred years preceding and one hundred years following Christ's birth. The Roman Catholic Church considers most of these writings to be part of the inspired Scripture, and the Apocryphal books promote Catholic heresies such as prayers to the dead, the use of ritual to overcome the devil, and salvation through good works. In 1546 the Council of Trent decreed that the canon of the O.T. should include them (except the Prayer of Manasseh and I and II Esdras) ... the decree pronounces an anathema upon anyone who "does not accept as sacred and canonical

the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts" (*The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, pp. x,xv). The Council of Trent was an attempt by the Catholic Church to counteract the Protestant Reformation with its battle cry of "faith alone" and "Scripture alone." By adding the Apocrypha to the canon of Scripture, the Catholic Church, in effect, rendered the rest of the Bible impotent. "The books named in the decree [of Trent] include the apocryphal Old Testament books, and placed unwritten traditions of the church upon an equal footing with Holy Scriptures as approved of Christ or of the Holy Spirit. Any appeal to Holy Scripture as expressing the supreme will of God was thereafter useless in the Latin Church" (Edwin W. Rice, *Our Sixty-six Sacred Books*, p. 112).

It is true that early editions of the 1611 KJV (as well as many other Reformation Bibles, including the German Luther Bible) contained the Apocrypha, but these books were included for historical reference only, not as additions to the canon of Scripture. By 1640 editions of the KJV were being printed without the Apocrypha (though it continued to be printed in some editions of the KJV until the 1800s). It is important to note that in the early King James Bibles the Apocryphal books were placed between the Old and New Testaments rather than intermingled within the O.T. itself as is done in Catholic Bibles. In the Jerusalem Bible (a Catholic Bible), for example, Tobit, Judith, and the Maccabees follow Nehemiah; the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus follow Ecclesiastes; Baruch follows Lamentations; etc.

The Apocryphal books were never considered inspired or canonical by Protestant denominations. Alexander McClure, a biographer of the KJV translators, says: "...the Apocryphal books in those times were more read and accounted of than now, though by no means placed on a level with the canonical books of Scripture" (McClure, *Translators Revived*, p. 185). He then lists seven reasons assigned by the KJV translators for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England clearly states that the Apocrypha have no scriptural authority. "...[the Church of England] doth not apply to them to establish any doctrine." The Westminster Confession says, "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings." Luther included a note on the Apocrypha which stated, "These are books not to be held in equal esteem with those of Holy Scripture..."

The *Third Millennium Bible* (based on the *KJV21*) is following the trend today to bring the Apocryphal books back into common use. Because of ecumenical activities involving the Roman Catholic Church in these end times, there is an increasing tendency for publishers to include the Apocryphal writings with the Bible. This is being done by the United Bible Societies in many languages. By 1981, for example, the American Bible Society had published over 500,000 copies of the Today's English Version with the Apocryphal books included. In the mid-1980s I visited the Bible Society book depot in Calcutta, India, and was shown massive stacks of Revised Standard Version Bibles containing the Apocrypha. These had been published by the American Bible Society and shipped to India for distribution. The 1992-93 American Bible Society catalog of Scripture Resources lists at least nine different Bibles containing the Apocrypha.

DO WE REALLY NEED A NEW EDITION OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE?

In conclusion, let me say that I don't believe a new edition of the King James Bible is necessary. I believe the problem of the antiquation of the KJV is seriously exaggerated by proponents of modern versions.

It is also crucial to understand that the English of the King James Bible is not merely that of the 17th century. IT IS NOT THE LANGUAGE OF SHAKESPEARE, BUT THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEBREW AND GREEK. "Bishop Lightfoot affirmed that this version was the storehouse of the highest truth and the purest well of our native English. 'Indeed,' he wrote, 'we may take courage from the fact that the language of our English Bible is not the language of the age in which the translators lived, but in its grand simplicity stands out in contrast to the ornate and often affected diction of the literature of the time'" (*The Divine Original*, Trinitarian Bible Society, nd.).

Of the English language used in the KJV, George Marsh, in a lecture of 1870, notes: "It was an assemblage of the best forms of expression applicable to the communication of religious truth that then existed, or had existed, in any and all the successive stages through which England had passed in its entire history. ... Even now [in 1870, the language of the King James Bible is] scarcely further removed from the current phraseology of life and books than it was two hundred years since. The subsequent movement of the English speech has not been in a right line of recession from the Scriptural dialect. It has been rather a curve of revolution around it" (Edwin Bissell, *The Historic Origin of the Bible*, 1873, p. 353).

When the Harvard University Press published *The Literary Guide* to the Bible in 1987, they selected the KJV for the literary analysis of each of the Bible books. "...our reasons for doing so must be obvious: it is the version most English readers associate with the literary qualities of the Bible, and it is still arguably the version that best preserves the literary effects of the original languages" (Foreword to *Tindale's Triumph, John Rogers' Monument: The New Testament of the Matthew's Bible 1537*, p. ii).

We must keep this in mind when we hear the complaining about the "old antiquated King James English." THE KING JAMES BIBLE IS WRITTEN IN BEAUTIFUL AND PRECISE ENGLISH FITTED PERFECTLY TO THE HEBREW AND GREEK SCRIPTURES, AND IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO LEARN THE FEW ANTIQUATED TERMS NECESSARY TO READ IT WITH UNDERSTANDING. If one is not willing to give diligent study to the Bible, he will not understand it no matter which translation he uses. And if your Bible reads like the morning newspaper, dear friend, you don't have the Word of God, because the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures do not read as simply and as contemporarily as the morning newspaper! While some portions of the Greek N.T., portions of John's Gospel, for example, are so simple a child could understand them, other portions of the Bible are very complex.

In overall reading level, the KJV is within the reach of anyone with an average education. It is written on an 8th to 10th grade level. This has been proven from computer analysis made by Dr. Donald Waite. He ran several books of the KJV through the Right Writer program and found that Genesis 1, Exodus 1, and Romans 8 are on the 8th grade level; Romans 1 and Jude are on the 10th grade level; and Romans 3:1-23 is on the 6th grade level. We note, further, that while Shakespeare used a vocabulary of roughly 37,000 English words, the King James Bible employs

only 8,000 (John Wesley Sawyer, *The Newe Testament by William Tindale*, p. 10, quoting BBC TV, "The Story of English," copyright 1986).

Dr. Donald Waite says, "I know hundreds of people whose intelligence and educational levels have not reached as high as some of these [modern version proponents who claim the KJV is hopeless antiquated] ... people who say they can't understand this King James Bible, yet these people do understand it. How do you figure that out? Remember 1 Cor. 2:14 which states, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' This verse is still true, regardless of which translation is used" (Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, pp. 50,51).

Dr. Waite continues: "Some people say they like a particular version because they say it's more readable. Now, readability is one thing, but does the readability conform to what's in the original Greek and Hebrew language? You can have a lot of readability, but if it doesn't match up with what God has said, it's of no profit. In the King James Bible, the words match what God has said. You may say it's difficult to read, but study it out. It's hard in the Hebrew and Greek and, perhaps, even in the English in the King James Bible. But to change it around just to make it simple, or interpreting it, instead of translating it, is wrong. You've got lots of interpretation, but we don't want that in a translation. We want exactly what God said in the Hebrew and Greek brought over into English" (Ibid., pp. 241,242).

As noted earlier in this report, The Bible for Today ministry is in the process of publishing just such a Bible. It is called the ["Defined King James Bible,"](#) and it simply and effectively defines the KJV words in the margins. This is the logical solution to the problem of antiquated terminology and it avoids all of the confusion created by the production of multiple versions in the English language. Until December 15, 1998, the *Defined King James Bible* is being offered at a pre-publication price. Contact Bible for Today, 900 Park Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108. 609-854-4452 (voice), 609-854-2464 (fax).